

REMARKS

**Reconsideration And Allowance
Are Respectfully Requested.**

Claims 55-78 are currently pending. Claims 55-58 have been amended. New claims 59-78 have been added. No claims have been canceled. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicant would first like to thank Examiner Dennis Dorsey for the courtesies extended during the interview conducted on July 16, 2003. During the course of this interview, proposed amendments to the pending claims were discussed as they relate to German Patent No. 8604004.9 (the '004.9 patent). After discussing the '004.9 patent and the proposed claims, Examiner Dorsey agreed to consider amended claims focusing on various features of the disengageable connector of the present application.

With regard to the outstanding rejections, claims 55 and 56 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by the '004.9 patent. In addition, claims 58 and 59 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the '004.9 patent. These rejections are respectfully traversed in view of the preceding amendments and the remarks which follow.

The claims of the present application have been amended so as to focus upon various features of the present disengageable connector. The claimed features are believed to differentiate the claimed connector from that of connectors disclosed in the prior art.

In particular, independent claims 55 and 70 define a disengageable connector for interconnecting two individual panels to form a surface on top of a support structure. The disengageable connector includes a base having a given width, wherein the base has a projection extending vertically from the base. The projection has top and bottom portions including identical right and left halves for insertion into edges of the two panels to be connected. The top portion of each of the right and left halves comprise identical extensions extending horizontally in opposite directions equal distances wherein the combined width of the extensions is less than the width of the base. The extensions include at least one angled portion obliquely sloped in relation to a longitudinal axis of the base. The connector further includes two protrusions extending vertically from the base. The protrusions are spaced apart from the projection and are located on opposite sides of the projection beyond the lateral extent of the extensions.

In contrast to the disengageable connector defined in claims 55 and 70, the '004.9 patent fails to disclose or suggest a disengageable connector as claimed. Specifically, the '004.9 patent fails to disclose or suggest extensions including at least one angled portion obliquely sloped in relation to a longitudinal axis of the base. The flange of the '004.9 patent only includes surfaces which are either parallel to or perpendicular to a longitudinal axis of the base. The orientation of the surfaces disclosed in the '004.9 patent are specifically chosen to enhance the attachment between adjacent plates. As such, the claimed obliquely angled surfaces would be contrary to the intentions of the structure disclosed in the '004.9 patent.

As such, the '004.9 patent is believed to neither disclose nor suggest the claimed disengageable connector and Applicant respectfully requests that the outstanding rejection be withdrawn. As to those claims dependent upon independent claims 55 and 70, they are believed to overcome the prior art of record for the reasons presented above and Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection relating thereto be withdrawn.

With regard to new independent claim 64, a disengageable connector is claimed. The disengageable connector includes a base having a projection extending vertically therefrom. The projection has top and bottom portions and includes identical right and left halves for insertion into edges of two panels to be connected. The top portion of each of the right and left halves comprise identical extensions extending horizontally on opposite directions. The disengageable connector further includes two protrusions extending vertically from the base. The protrusions are spaced apart from the projection and are located on opposite sides of the projection. In addition, each of the protrusions includes a tapered surface.

In contrast to the claimed invention, the '004.9 patent includes bends 9. However, the bends 9 are perpendicularly oriented relative to the base and include no tapered surfaces as required by the present claims. The orientation of the surfaces defined in the '004.9 patent are chosen to enhance the secure attachment between adjacent plates. As such, tapered surfaces as claimed would be highly undesirable and contrary to the structure disclosed in the '004.9 patent.

As such, it is Applicant's opinion that new claim 64 is neither anticipated nor suggested by the '004.9 patent and Applicant respectfully requests that the claim be indicated as being allowable. As to those claims dependent upon independent claim 64, they are believed to overcome the prior art of record for the reasons presented above.

Further, and with reference to new claim 66, a disengageable connector is further disclosed. The disengageable connector includes a base having a projection extending vertically therefrom. The connector further includes two protrusions extending vertically from the base. The protrusions are spaced apart from the projection and are located on opposite sides of the projection. The base further includes at least one recess formed between the projection and the two protrusions.

In contrast to the claimed invention, the '004.9 patent fails to disclose a base member having recesses formed in the space between the web 8 and the bends 9. The '004.9 patent has no reason for the inclusion of the claimed recesses based upon its very distinct structure and function.

As such, it is Applicant's opinion that the '004.9 patent neither anticipates nor suggests the claimed invention and Applicant respectfully requests that new claim 66 is allowable over the prior art of record. As to those claims dependent upon independent claims 66, they are believed to overcome the prior art of record for the reasons presented above.

Attached hereto is a marked up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version With Markings To Show Changes Made".

It is believed that this case is in condition for allowance and reconsideration thereof and early issuance is respectfully requested. If it is felt that an interview would expedite prosecution of this application, please do not hesitate to contact applicants' representative at the below number.

Respectfully submitted,



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